

What is claimed is:

1. A multimedia conferencing terminal comprising:
a media display;
a plurality of output switches, each output switch receiving one or more media outputs, each output switch responsive to an output control signal for selecting one or more of the one or more media outputs to output as switched outputs, thereby providing one or more switched outputs to the media display; and
a policy manager, the policy manager applying a predetermined policy to generate the output control signal, and the policy manager providing the output control signal to the plurality of output switches, whereby the media display is controlled according to the predetermined policy.
2. The multimedia conferencing terminal of Claim 1 further comprising a plurality of media displays, each of the plurality of media displays being controlled according to the predetermined policy.
3. The multimedia conferencing terminal of Claim 1 further comprising:
a plurality of media sources;
a plurality of source switches, each source switch receiving one or more of the plurality of media sources, each source switch responsive to a source control signal for selecting the one or more of the plurality of media sources to output as switched sources, thereby providing one or more switched sources; and
the policy manager applying the predetermined policy to generate the source control signal, and the policy manager providing the source control signal to the plurality of source switches, whereby the one or more switched sources are controlled according to the predetermined policy.
4. The multimedia conferencing terminal of Claim 1 wherein the predetermined policy includes a content policy and a people policy.
5. The multimedia conferencing terminal of Claim 1 wherein the media sources include at least one of a microphone, a camera, and a computer.
6. The multimedia conferencing terminal of Claim 1 further comprising a token manager, the token manager operating a periodically reserve for the terminal an exclusive control over one or more roles of the predetermined policy.

7. A multimedia conferencing system comprising:
 - a multipoint conference unit; and
 - a plurality of multimedia conferencing terminals connected in a communicating relationship with the multipoint conference unit, each multimedia conferencing terminal including a policy manager, the policy manager applying a predetermined policy to a plurality of media streams associated with a multimedia conference among the plurality of multimedia conferencing terminals.
8. The multimedia conferencing system of Claim 7, wherein each multimedia conferencing terminal further includes a token manager, the token managers of the plurality of multimedia conferencing terminals cooperating to provide exclusive control to one of the plurality of multimedia conferencing terminals over at least one of the plurality of media streams.
9. A multimedia conferencing device comprising:
 - a network interface for coupling with at least one multimedia conferencing device in a conference;
 - a switch coupled to the network interface, wherein the switch receiving one or more media streams from one or more sources, each switch responsive to a control signal for selecting one or more of media streams to output as switched outputs; and
 - a policy manager coupled to the switch, wherein the policy manager generates the control signal for the switch according to the predetermined policy.
10. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9,
 - wherein the policy includes assigning hierarchical roles to streams, wherein the hierarchy of roles are indicated by labels in the media streams.
11. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9,
 - wherein the switched outputs include at least people stream and content stream.
12. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 11,
 - wherein the people stream is displayed on a people display; and wherein the content stream is displayed on a content display.
13. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9, further comprising:

a capability manager coupled to the policy manager, wherein the capability manager negotiate the communication capability with the coupled multimedia conference device.

14. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 13,
wherein the capability manager negotiates the supported levels of hierarchy of roles and collapses the unsupported levels of roles to the lowest supported level.
15. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9, further comprising:
a token manager coupled to the capability manager, wherein each token represents the source of a role, wherein the token manager maintain the identity of the exclusive holder of the token within the conference.
16. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9, further comprising:
a converter coupled to the network interface, wherein the converter is configured to
detect a first role signal of a received media stream,
convert the first role signal into a second role signal for the media stream, and
retransmit the media stream.
17. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 9, further comprising:
a microphone, a camera, a speaker and a first video display, all of which are coupled to the switch.
18. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 17,
wherein a video stream of a first role is displayed on a first section of the first video display; and
wherein a video stream of a second role is displayed on a second section of the first video display.
19. The multimedia conferencing device in Claim 17, further comprising:
a second video display;
wherein a video stream of a first role is displayed on the first video display; and
wherein a video stream of a second role is displayed on the second video display.